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III.—THE LITERARY METHODS OF THE GONCOURTS

Estimates of the work of the Goncourts have varied considerably. While the majority of critics have treated the inseparable brothers as one man, a few writers such as Jules Lemaître¹ and A. de Pontmartin² have insisted on drawing a distinction between these literary Siamese twins. To the minds of these critics, the novels due to the pen of Edmond alone were vastly inferior to those produced in collaboration with Jules. Among the host of critics who do not feel that a difference is discernible in the talents of the two brothers, there is further diversity of opinion. Sainte-Beuve,³ a friend of the Goncourts, freely recognizes their merits as collectors of notes, books, and engravings, and would grant at least that their novel *Sœur Philomène* appears to be drawn from life.⁴ For Emile Zola, the authors are admirable in their descriptions of human beings as related to environment.⁵ Ferdinand Brunetière finds that the Goncourts, while pretending to follow nature in

¹ Jules Lemaître, *Impressions de Théâtre*, Paris (1891), iv, p. 221.

² A. de Pontmartin, *Souvenirs d'un vieux critique*, Paris (1886), vii, p. 225.

³ Cf. Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux lundis* (1885), iv, p. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2. A. de Pontmartin (*op. cit.*) sees in the commendation of Sainte-Beuve for the artistic activity of the brothers an ironical touch. That Sainte-Beuve thought rather well of *Sœur Philomène* may be inferred from the following quotation from the *Journal des Goncourt* (1906), I, p. 389: " Là-dessus il [Sainte-Beuve] nous parle de SOEUR PHILOMÈNE, disant que seules ont de la valeur, les œuvres venant de l'étude de la nature, qu'il a un goût très médiocre pour la fantaisie pure. . . "

⁵ Emile Zola, *Les romanciers naturalistes*, Paris (1893), p. 228: "... les paysages dans lesquels ils [les hommes] marchent les complètent et les expliquent. . . "

the minutest detail, unconsciously illustrate the excesses of Romanticism, in their exclusive attention to the abnormalities of human nature.⁶ Paul Bourget would emphasize their determinism, which has exerted a noteworthy influence upon Alphonse Daudet and Emile Zola.⁷ A large number of critics have, of course, given special consideration to that obvious lack of organization in the work of the Goncourts which is due to their use of note-books.⁸

⁶ Ferdinand Brunetière, *Le roman naturaliste*, Paris (1896), p. 259. Cf. Sainte-Beuve, *op. cit.*, x, p. 395: "Un bon ordinaire n'existe pas pour eux dans les choses de l'esprit: il leur faut le rare."

⁷ Paul Bourget, *Nouveaux essais de psychologie contemporaine* (1885), pp. 137-139.

⁸ Jules Lemaitre, Emile Faguet, and René Doumic are among those who dwell upon this point. Jules Lemaitre writes (*Les contemporains*, Paris, 1894, III, p. 52): "Quelques critiques leur ont vivement reproché ce dédain de la composition et d'avoir l'air (surtout dans *Charles* et dans *Manette*) de vider leur portefeuille au hasard, de secouer leurs notes pêle-mêle autour d'une maigre histoire." In the opinion of Emile Faguet (*Propos littéraires*, Paris, 1905, III, p. 179): "Ils [les romans] se composent tous: 1° d'un portrait fort intéressant: MM. de Goncourt ont vu quelqu'un, homme ou femme, et reproduisent ses traits, gestes et démarches avec une scrupuleuse fidélité: 2° de scènes, également vues, également exactes, rattachées plus ou moins adroitement à ce personnage." In the language of René Doumic (*Portraits d'écrivains*, Paris, 1911, I, p. 185): "Leurs livres sont la collection de leurs notes." This judgment meets an antagonist in the person of Georges Rodenbach (*L'Élite*, Paris, 1899, p. 37), who declares that the Goncourt brothers always took pains to amplify their personal observations with a very fecund imagination. Léon A. Daudet, in *Les idées en marche* (Paris, 1896, p. 124) would compare the psychological study in *Mme Gervaisais* to the work of Racine. Henri d'Alméras (*Avant la gloire*, Paris, 1902, p. 44) thinks that *Germinie Lacerteux*, among other novels of the Goncourts, was a masterpiece, and quotes Sainte-Beuve as writing to the authors (p. 45): "J'ai été attaché . . . par ce récit simple, vrai, d'une vérité si peu flatteuse mais si conforme à la réalité, où jamais aucun trait n'est livré au hasard ni accordé au convenu. . . Mais je suis frappé d'une chose: c'est que pour bien juger cet ouvrage et en parler, il faudrait une poétique tout autre que l'ancienne, une

If we turn to the estimates made by the Goncourts of their own work, we shall find that they believe all excellence to depend upon a direct study of nature. According to their view, the weakness of their early novel *Bas-Meudon* consists in their failure to see humanity with a *vision directe*, unobscured by the medium of books.⁹ They would laud *Renée Mauperin* and *Germinie Lacerteux* because the principal characters of these books belong to that *vie vraie* which ten years of first-hand observation have revealed.¹⁰ The modern novel, they feel, should be based upon *documents* obtained by hearsay, or noted down from nature, much as history is compiled with written documents.¹¹ In putting such a theory into practice, it is in-

poétique appropriée aux productions d'un art nouveau et d'une recherche nouvelle." G. Neunier (*Le bilan littéraire du XIX^e siècle*, Paris, 1898, p. 276), while agreeing with Brunetière in regard to the tendency of our authors to study exceptional types, believes (p. 278) that "leurs livres sont empreints de ce charme inquiétant qui les fera consulter dans l'avenir comme des mémoires piquants et fidèles sur le XIX^e siècle." E. Gilbert (*Le roman en France pendant le XIX^e siècle*, Paris and Brussels, 1909, p. 272) maintains that the novels of the Goncourts are based on distorted recollections which have been forced into a conventional frame-work. For the interesting judgments of the Goncourts by A. Dumas the younger, cf. J. Troubat, *Souvenirs du dernier secrétaire de Sainte-Beuve*, Paris (1890), p. 340. The thesis of Heinrich Friedrich: *Die literarischen Theorien der Goncourts* (Heidelberg dissertation, Lahr, 1910) is a convenient compendium.

⁹ *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires* (Edmond et Jules de Goncourt), Paris (1880), p. 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

¹¹ *Journal*, II, p. 229. *Ibid.*, p. 214: "En littérature on ne fait bien que ce qu'on a vu ou souffert." *Ibid.*, p. 273: "Maintenant il n'y a plus dans notre vie qu'un grand intérêt: *l'émotion de l'étude sur le vrai*. Sans cela l'ennui et le vide." *Préfaces et manifestes cit.*, p. 45: "Ces notes, je les extrais de notre journal: JOURNAL DES GONCOURTS (*Mémoires de la vie littéraire*); elles sont l'embryon documentaire sur lequel, deux ans après, mon frère et moi composons

evitable that infinite attention should be paid to details, particularly such as pertain to environment.¹²

In view of the widely varying judgments concerning the methods of the Goncourts, and even regarding the ex-

Germinie Lacerteux, étudiée et montrée par nous en service chez notre vieille cousine, Mlle de Courmont, dont nous écrivions une biographie véridique à la façon d'une biographie d'histoire moderne."

¹² *Journal*, II, p. 281: "La description matérielle des choses et des lieux n'est point dans le roman, telle que nous la comprenons, la description pour la description. Elle est le moyen de transporter le lecteur dans un certain milieu favorable à l'émotion morale qui doit jaillir de ces choses et de ces lieux."

In their regard for environment and background, the Goncourts are far from being the innovators that they imagined themselves. As Professor C. H. Grandgent, of Harvard University, has suggested, their theories here remind one strongly of the methods of Balzac. Henry James (*Notes on Novelists, with some other Notes*, New York, 1914, p. 157) thus summarizes the situation so far as Balzac is concerned: "His truest and vividest people are those whom the conditions in which they are so palpably imbedded have simplified not less than emphasized; simplified mostly to singleness of motive and passion and interest, to quite measurably finite existence; whereas his ostensibly higher spirits, types necessarily least observed and most independently thought out, in the interest of their humanity, as we would fain ourselves think them, are his falsest and weakest and show most where his imagination and efficient sympathy break down."

If I have understood Mr. James aright, the work of the Goncourts affords at least one curious contrast with this statement concerning Balzac. Abbé Blamfoix, justly considered as one of the best drawn characters of the Goncourts, appears to have been as nearly a product of the imagination as can be found in their novels. How convincing the portrait of Abbé Blamfoix is may perhaps be gathered from the following anecdote in the *Journal*, v, p. 334: "Au moment où je m'avançais pour signer sur le registre, le maire me fait signe d'aller à lui. Et le voici—du reste en homme fort distingué—moitié mécontent, moitié satisfait, à se plaindre à moi, d'avoir fait figurer son frère dans un roman, avec des détails si particuliers, qu'il est impossible, me dit-il, que je ne l'aie pas connu. Le maire est, à ce qu'il parait, le frère de l'abbé Caron, que j'ai croqué sous le nom de l'abbé Blamfoix, dans *RENÉE MAUPERIN*. Je me défends, en lui répondant que, dans mon livre, je n'ai fait aucune personnalité, que

tent of their influence upon the naturalistic school,¹³ perhaps it is in order to conduct a purely empirical investigation, leaving out of account all matters of opinion, and limiting the argument to documentary evidence, of which the Goncourts themselves were such doughty champions. Attention will be confined to the six novels which the brothers wrote together: *Les hommes de lettres* (Charles Demailly), 1860; *Sœur Philomène*, 1861; *Renée Mauperin*, 1864; *Germinie Lacerteux*, 1865; *Manette Salomon*, 1867; and *Madame Gervaisais*, 1869. The question of the relative talents of Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, and of the value of their historical, dramatic, and artistic work, will be passed over for the present.

It is important to determine, with more precision than has been done heretofore, the extent to which the Goncourts employed their notes in the composition of their works. In answering this question, we shall be aided to a certain extent by a comparison of the *Journal* with the novels, for it is well known that a large number of characters and anecdotes in the *Journal* were the germ of later fiction.¹⁴

j'ai peint un type général—et ce qui est la vérité—que je n'ai jamais vu ni connu l'abbé."

¹³ L. Marillier, *The International Quarterly*, Vol. VII (1903), p. 330, says: "It is because we ourselves have adopted the best part, the most individual part of their style and their modes of thought that the novels of the Goncourts no longer startle one nowadays, even when read for the first time. Most of our contemporary novelists are their disciples, unwittingly at times; and their imitators, whose name is legion, have, though they did not set out to do so, transformed the revolutionaries of yesterday into the classical writers of to-day." (Translation by Professor F. C. de Sumichrast). E. Gilbert (*op. cit.*) would deny much of the influence here attributed to the Goncourts.

¹⁴ A fact which seems to have passed unobserved is that in some cases the notes went into the novels first, and were afterwards tran-

Edmond de Goncourt has cited the twenty-odd pages of notes from the *Journal* which form the embryo of *Germinie Lacerteux*. The original of Germinie was Rose, a servant of the Goncourts' cousin, Mlle de Courmont.¹⁵ He has also indicated that the original of Mme Gervaisais was none other than their aunt Mme Nephtalie de Courmont, of whom he writes a sketch twenty-three years after the appearance of the novel itself.¹⁶ In other volumes of the *Journal* he has pointed out that from Pouthier, the vagabond architect, a friend of their youth, was sketched Anatole in *Manette Salomon*.^{16a} Other examples will be introduced later.

When we come to examine the manner in which the Goncourts utilized their notes, we shall be confronted with the greatest diversity of method. In some cases there is a literal transcription of the notes into the text of the novels; in other cases, the original materials undergo alteration, if not distortion, in order to meet the exigencies of fiction.

scribed in the *Journal*. For instance, in the *Journal*, II, pp. 226 ff., the authors cite a passage from *Germinie Lacerteux*. Cf. first reference in note 16. Many notes were utilized directly in the novels, and no hint of them can be found in the *Journal*. An example is the sketch of the life of Crescent (*Manette Salomon*, p. 285), a character modeled on the painter Millet (cf. notes 44, 45, 46). Crescent begins his artistic career by imitating pictures that he had seen in certain old books at Nancy. Millet, as a lad, started drawing by imitating the engravings in an old illustrated family Bible.

¹⁵ *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, pp. 23-45.

¹⁶ *Journal*, IX, pp. 63-72. *Ibid.*, p. 72, he boasts that the story of Mme Gervaisais, so far from being a work of the imagination, is almost literally true. The only differences of importance are the delay of two hours in the death of the heroine, and the fact that the half-idiot child called Pierre-Charles had in reality died of meningitis before his mother's departure for Italy. Cf. *Journal*, III, p. 263.

^{16a} For the identification of Anatole, in *Manette Salomon*, with Pouthier, cf. *Journal*, IV, p. 358, and V, p. 283.

In *Charles Demailly*, fifteen pages of notes are copied pell-mell¹⁷ under the pretext that they will answer for a description of the hero's "soul." The letter of Charles Demailly to Chavannes, giving his impressions at the funeral of his uncle, is drawn almost *verbatim* from the narrative in the *Journal*.¹⁸ The servant Marie-Jeanne remains unaltered, even in name.¹⁹ Not only are the details of the house and furniture most easily recognizable, but actually the characteristic remarks of their uncle about a suitor for his daughter's hand: "Il est très bien ce jeune homme! . . . Il m'a parfaitement expliqué le baromètre . . ." is taken bodily from the *Journal*.²⁰ Even the hydropathy to which Charles was forced to submit seems to hark back to a personal experience.²¹ The original of Renée Mauperin

¹⁷ *Charles Demailly*, pp. 74-89. The following are some of the sources of the notes:

	<i>Charles Demailly</i>	<i>Journal</i> , Vol. I.
1)	pp. 75, 76 - - - - -	pp. 86, 89
2)	77, 78 - - - - -	216
3)	78 - - - - -	209
4)	78, 79 - - - - -	98, 99
5)	79 - - - - -	121
6)	80 - - - - -	188
7)	81 - - - - -	125, 126
8)	81 - - - - -	216
9)	82, 83 - - - - -	164-166
10)	84, 85 - - - - -	181, 182
11)	85, 86 - - - - -	206, 207
12)	88, 89 - - - - -	241, 242

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-191. Cf. *Journal*, I, pp. 197-202.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187. Cf. *Journal*, I, p. 201.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188. Cf. *Journal*, I, p. 202.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 400. Cf. *Journal*, III, p. 258.

Another character in *Charles Demailly* that seems taken from the *Journal* is the peasant physician. Cf. *Ch. Demailly*, p. 283, and *Journal*, II, p. 57, concerning Procureur, physician of the Goncourts' grandfather. The *Vente d'une jolie collection d'autographes modernes* (*Ch. Demailly*, p. 375, etc.) may have been suggested by the

is sketched in the *Journal* much as she is portrayed in the novel itself. She is the same girl of free and easy manners, but delicate sensibilities, moved to deep melancholy by the funeral march of Chopin.²² Likewise *Sœur Philo-*

trick played by H. . . upon Mlle B. . . (*Journal*, I, p. 141). The significant silence of the friends of Charles about his book (*Ch. Demailly*, p. 120) is probably suggested by an experience similar to that of the Goncourts after the publication of *Renée Mauperin* (*Journal*, II, p. 168:—"Voilà trois jours que nos amis s'abstiennent rigoureusement de nous en parler.") The *Scandale* in *Charles Demailly* (pp. 21-25) had a history not unlike *L'Éclair* in the *Journal* (I, pp. 5, 6, 13, 14, 15). Charles Demailly has the same sensitivity as the Goncourts (*Ch. Demailly*, p. 77, *e. g.*; cf. *Journal*, I, pp. 272, 273, and II, p. 230, etc.). The burlesque figure Vif-Arget in *Charles Demailly* (pp. 59-62) appears not unlike *le Garçon*, which amused Flaubert in his younger days (*Journal*, I, pp. 321, 322).

In the *Journal*, I, pp. 352, 353, is a description of a nurse making her rounds in the hospital which is utilized in *Sœur Philomène*. The expression *boîte à chocolat* (*Sœur Philomène*, p. 216) is found in the *Journal*, I, p. 354.

The *Journal*, II, p. 308, mentions a trip to Barbizon, in the Fontainebleau forest, to work on *Manette Salomon*. The authors endure the same kind of lodgings as Coriolis and Manette.

The strange attachment of Coriolis to an illiterate woman like Manette (*Manette Salomon*, p. 219) is in accord with the spirit of the following excerpt from the *Journal*, I, p. 187: "Il faut à des hommes comme nous, une femme peu élevée, peu éduquée, qui ne soit que gaieté et esprit naturel, parce que celle-là nous réjouira et nous charmera ainsi qu'un agréable animal auquel nous pourrions nous attacher."

Garnotelle (*Manette Salomon*, p. 152 and p. 202) is possibly modeled somewhat on the rather patronizing About (*Journal*, I, pp. 276, 277).

The long paragraph in *Manette Salomon* (pp. 28-30) on "La Blague" is perhaps an amplification of the note in the *Journal*, I, p. 166:—"Jamais siècle n'a plus blagué, etc."

The origin of one of the scenes in *Manette Salomon* is revealed by Edmond de Goncourt in the *Journal*, VI, p. 231: "Dîner hier chez Daudet, avec le peintre Beaulieu, le peintre des feux de Bengale dont j'ai donné l'atelier dans MANETTE SALOMON. . ."

²² *Journal*, I, pp. 145, 146.

mène is founded upon an incident related to the Goncourts by their friend Bouilhet. The latter, it appears, was acquainted with an interne who was loved platonically by a nurse at the hospital. The interne committed suicide, and the nurse, after kneeling a full quarter of an hour by the bedside of the dead man, stole away a lock of his hair, which had been intended for his mother.²³ The incident of the *patraque* who pleaded in vain for admission to the hospital in *Sœur Philomène* is taken with only slight alterations from the *Journal*.²⁴

So far the literary productions of the Goncourts give every evidence of a perfect accord with their theory that the novel should be a sort of up-to-date history, founded upon a documentary basis, and hence absolutely true to life. Despite this apparent consistency, the authors subject their fundamental principle to a very severe strain. Emile Faguet has already noted that they added to their Renée Mauperin a number of features which did not belong to the original.²⁵ He might have stated further that the same process is adopted for almost every other charac-

²³ *Journal*, I, p. 311.

²⁴ *Journal*, I, pp. 354-356. Cf. *Sœur Philomène*, pp. 118-120.

²⁵ *Propos littéraires*, Paris, 1905, III, p. 180. The present discussion of the characters in the novels of the Goncourts applies with equal force to the naturalistic doctrine of environment, which is perhaps best stated by Zola: "Les romanciers [Edmond et Jules de Goncourt] obéissent simplement à cette fatalité qui ne leur permet pas d'abstraire un personnage des objets qui l'environnent; ils le voient dans son milieu, dans l'air où il trempe, avec ses vêtements, le rire de son visage, le coup de soleil qui le frappe, le fond de verdure sur lequel il se détache, tout ce qui le circonstancie et lui sert de cadre. L'art nouveau est là: on n'étudie plus les hommes comme de simples curiosités intellectuelles, dégagées de la nature ambiante; on croit au contraire que les hommes n'existent pas seuls, qu'ils tiennent aux paysages, que les paysages dans lesquels ils marchent les complètent et les expliquent. . ." (Emile Zola, *Les romanciers naturalistes*, pp. 227, 228).

ter in the novels, and to a far greater extent than he would imply.

Let us take for instance one of the most consistent characters ever depicted by the Goncourts—Charles Demailly—easily recognized as the authors' own image. Yet, not content with the materials available from their own neurasthenic lives, they introduce incidents pertaining to the robust Flaubert, whose manly vigor they were accustomed to envy. Flaubert was once so furiously in love with his mistress that he came near killing her, and was deterred by a sort of hallucination about the resulting trial for murder: "Oui, oui," he remarked, "j'ai entendu craquer sous moi les bancs de la cour d'assises."²⁶ Marthe, escaping death from the hands of her semi-invalid husband Charles by a similar miracle, sees in his strange expression "cette colère blanche dont elle entendait à côté d'elle le pas craquer sur le parquet."²⁷

If Flaubert is Charles Demailly in one place, he evidently does not adhere closely to his *rôle*, for in another passage he talks like de Rémonville about the merits of play-writing.²⁸ On the other hand, one of the numerous quarrels which Charles has with his wife is doubtless borrowed from the love affairs of a person designated in the *Journal* as "X . . .," whose tyrannical treatment of his mistress offers no suggestion of the relations between Charles and Marthe.²⁹ One day "X . . .," with a tearful voice, confesses that his mistress has adopted another lover.³⁰ Similarly Marthe feigns to take refuge with Nachette, an enemy of Charles.³¹

²⁶ *Journal*, I, p. 8.

²⁷ *Charles Demailly*, p. 343.

²⁸ *Charles Demailly*, p. 250.—"Pourquoi fais-tu du théâtre?" etc. Cf. *Journal*, I, p. 304 (Flaubert): "Au fond, quand on fait une pièce, on est f. . ."

²⁹ *Journal*, I, p. 123.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³¹ *Charles Demailly*, p. 335.

Marthe reads *L'Homme aux trois culottes* by Paul de Kock, to the excruciating disgust of her husband. She considers the book not only well-arranged and interesting, but a better picture of the Revolution than ordinary histories.³² In the *Journal*, we discover that the original eulogist of Paul de Kock was not a tantalizing, unsympathetic young actress, but a "femme bon garçon, vieille amie qui me raconte ses amants." Her remarks are essentially the same as those of Marthe. There is even the same impropriety involved, that of praising a second-rate historical novel to the author of a serious work like the *Histoire de la société pendant la Révolution*.³³

In *Manette Salomon*, the painter Coriolis is likewise a composite character. His noble name Naz de Coriolis, suggests Jules or Edmond de Goncourt, and he was made to suffer for it in the same way as our authors by narrow-minded persons who supposed that no serious contributions to art could be expected from an aristocrat.³⁴ Even his income of 6,000 francs per annum was exactly the same as that of the Goncourts. On the other hand, his adventures in Asia Minor have a strong resemblance to those of Flaubert.³⁵ In the *Journal* we read that Flaubert, like Coriolis, underwent "ses étapes forcées, ses dix-huit heures de cheval, ses jours sans eau, ses nuits dévorées d'insectes, etc." However, it is not long before Coriolis plays exactly the rôle of Tournemine.³⁶ Like this painter, Coriolis

³² *Ibid.*, p. 241.

³³ *Journal*, I, p. 206.

³⁴ *Journal*, III, pp. 70, 71. Cf. *Manette Salomon*, p. 179: "La signature Naz de Coriolis, mise en bas de ces tableaux, faisait imaginer un gentilhomme, un homme du monde et du salon, occupant ses loisirs et ses lendemains de bal avec le passe-temps d'un art. . ." For his income, cf. p. 34.

³⁵ *Journal*, II, p. 159. Cf. *Manette Salomon*, pp. 75-79.

³⁶ *Manette Salomon*, pp. 147, 148; *Journal*, II, p. 232. In the *Journal*, II, p. 272, the Goncourts mention receiving a package of letters

sets out to portray an Orient which is not a *pétard* like that of Decamps, but has "un brouillard opalisé . . ., avec des couleurs . . . comme un scintillement de morceaux de verre coloré . . ." ³⁷ Nevertheless, the description of the painting called the *Bain turc* in *Manette Salomon* ³⁸ seems to have been inspired by a *terra cotta* of Clodion. ³⁹ The characteristics of the *terra cotta*, so far as noted in the *Journal*, are practically identical with those of the *Bain turc*, except of course that the work of Coriolis is a painting, and that of Clodion is not. Yet again, Coriolis appears to have observed the watering-resort of Trouville through the eyes of the Goncourt brothers. ⁴⁰ Flaubert, for his part, reappears in *Manette Salomon* as Chassagnol, discoursing on an ideal beauty, belonging to no one people or epoch. ⁴¹

The painter Crescent is partly modeled on Jacques, who felt so little interest in military affairs that he declined a promotion to the rank of corporal offered him by the Duke of Orleans. ⁴² He preferred to spend his time making caricatures, which luckily were highly relished by his captain. This officer, after threatening to have Jacques shot, or at least sentenced to a week's imprisonment for neglect of

written by Tournemine from the Orient, and their intention to use these documents in *Manette Salomon*.

³⁷ *Manette Salomon*, p. 149. Cf. *Journal*, II, p. 233: "... un brouillard opalisé, dans lequel les couleurs baignent et scintillent comme dans une évaporation d'eau de perle, leur donnant l'harmonie la plus chatoyante. . ."

³⁸ *Manette Salomon*, pp. 168-170.

³⁹ *Journal*, I, p. 150.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, III, p. 58. Cf. *Manette Salomon*, pp. 338-341.

⁴¹ *Manette Salomon*, p. 332: "Est-ce que tu crois que ça n'est donné qu'à une époque, qu'à un peuple, le beau?" etc. Cf. *Journal*, II, p. 159. Flaubert here discourses about "un beau, non local, non spécial, un beau pur, un beau de toute éternité, etc."

⁴² *Journal*, I, p. 49.

duty, would request him to draw a cartoon of the wife of the adjutant—and revel in it.⁴³ Crescent, however, is principally Millet. Both were sons of peasants. Millet, during the early days at Barbizon, was taking a walk one day with Jacques. Some peasants who were reaping began making fun of the Parisians. “Millet s’approche d’eux, fait la bête, demande si une faux ça coupe bien et si c’est difficile de faire ce qu’ils font, puis prend la faux, et la lançant à toute volée, donne une leçon aux paysans éplafourdis.” Crescent plays the same trick on some peasants who call him in jest “le Parisien.”⁴⁴ The wife of Millet was a peasant woman, who could neither read nor write. Whenever he was obliged to be absent from home, he would correspond with his wife by signs which had been pre-

⁴³ *Journal* I, p. 51. Cf. *Manette Salomon*, p. 285:—“Eh bien! n . . . de D . . . f . . . ! disait le capitaine, qui l’avait fait appeler,—qu’est-ce que c’est, Crescent? Encore un manque de service. . . . Je devrais vous faire fusiller, s . . . n . . . de D . . . ! Est-ce que vous vous f . . . de moi! f . . . ! Tenez! fichez-vous là, et faites-moi la charge de la femme de l’adjutant . . . — La charge faite:—Étonnant, ce b . . . -là. C’est n . . . de D . . . n . . . de D . . . bien l’adjutante . . . — Et par la fenêtre:—Lieutenant, venez voir la charge de ce b . . . de Crescent!”

Journal, l. c.—“Ah! cré nom de D . . . ! qu’est-ce que c’est, Jacques, encore un manquement de service, f . . . Je devrais vous faire fusiller, sacré nom de D . . . ! Je vous ferai f . . . huit jours à la salle de police, nom de D . . . ! Tenez, f . . . -vous là et faites-moi la femme de l’adjutant.—La charge faite—Ce bougre-là, c’est charmant, charmant . . . oh! que c’est bien la femme de l’adjutant! Et aussitôt, par la fenêtre: ‘Lieutenant, venez voir la charge de ce bougre de Jacques!’ ”

⁴⁴ *Journal*, I, p. 51. Cf. *Manette Salomon*, p. 285: “J’ai été à ceux qui m’appelaient comme ça, je lui ai pris sa faux des mains, en faisant la bête, en lui demandant si c’était bien difficile, si ça coupait. . . . Et puis, v’lan! j’ai donné un coup de faux à la volée . . . Ah! il a vu que je connaissais son métier mieux que lui, et que je n’avais pas du poil aux mains pour cet ouvrage-là! . . . Depuis ça, ils me tirent tous des coups de chapeau . . . ”

vously agreed upon.⁴⁵ Similarly Crescent was wedded to a *payse*, who tolerated her husband's painting, of which she understood nothing, and earned what she could by day-labor.⁴⁶

At the same time, Millet differed from Crescent in essential respects. Instead of being totally "sans instruction, sans éducation" like Crescent,⁴⁷ he had at an early age learned to read the Bible and Virgil in Latin from the village priest, and possessed a certain taste for classical subjects. Furthermore, while Crescent might adopt the language of Jacques on occasion, he was far from imitating his fashions in dress. We read that Crescent "portait le pantalon de toile et les sabots du paysan." Jacques, for his part, wore on all occasions a black coat and "stove-pipe" hat, whether at work or while eating.⁴⁸ In general, Jacques presented the appearance of being "l'habile et le spirituel crayonneur, le brillant et savant aquafortiste,"⁴⁹ whereas Crescent produced the impression of "l'homme inculte et rustique comme un Jean Journet des bois et des champs. . ." ⁵⁰

The original of Mlle de Varandeuil, the mistress of Germinie Lacerteux, was a cousin of the Goncourts, Mlle de Courmont.⁵¹ In order to fill out their portrait of this worthy spinster, the Goncourts ascribe to her anecdotes which really belong to the career of their uncle. For instance, Mlle de Varandeuil, in order to preserve the life

⁴⁵ *Journal*, I, p. 50.

⁴⁶ *Manette Salomon*, p. 285. Cf. *Journal*, VIII, p. 58: "Si j'étais un journaliste, voici l'article que je ferais: Personne plus que moi, et avant tout le monde, n'ai loué d'une manière plus haute le talent de Millet (citations de MANETTE SALOMON et de mon JOURNAL) . . ."

⁴⁷ *Manette Salomon*, p. 278.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Journal*, I, p. 51.

⁵⁰ *Manette Salomon*, l. c.

⁵¹ *Journal*, I, p. 163. Cf. *Germinie Lacerteux*, chapter II.

of her father, who was in concealment, stood in the bread line every day. One day a woman in *sabots*, jealous of the preference shown to little Sempronie, gave the poor child a kick which confined her to her bed for nearly a month. Meanwhile the family would have perished from hunger but for a provision of rice which an acquaintance, the Countess of Auteuil, shared with them.⁵² M. de Courmont, an uncle of the Goncourts, was kicked by a young urchin, in *sabots* while at a *pension*, and had to be carried home. He was later sent to a *pension* at Lagny, where he was supplied with bread by the tenant of the family farm at Pomponne.⁵³

Little Pierre-Charles cries "M'man! . . . m'man! . . ." as the lifeless form of his mother slips from his arms to the floor.⁵⁴ The Goncourts pride themselves on having borrowed these words from a prostitute who called to her mother, through the door: "M'man, m'man, ouvre-moi!" and finally exclaimed, in vexation at the delay: "Ah! que c'est m . . . !" ⁵⁵

A similar process is undertaken in *Renée Mauperin*. "Ah!" cries poor, tender-hearted Renée, dying of heart-disease, "on aurait dû nous faire en autre chose. . . Pour-quoi le bon Dieu nous a-t-il faits tout en viande? . . ." ⁵⁶ This remark was taken from an old spinster, who had formerly been a nun. Far from having Renée's over-delicacy, she hardily told one story for which even the Goncourts apologize, acknowledging it to be better suited to the poem of Baroalde de Verville than to their own.⁵⁷

⁵² *Germinie Lacerteux*, p. 11.

⁵³ *Journal*, II, p. 211.

⁵⁴ *Madame Gervaisais*, p. 309.

⁵⁵ *Journal*, III, p. 264. "C'est ce qu'on peut appeler une perle ramassée dans du fumier," is the exultant comment of the authors.

⁵⁶ *Renée Mauperin*, chapter LI.

⁵⁷ *Journal*, II, p. 55: "Il y a une vieille demoiselle ici, une ci-devant religieuse, qui terminait une longue déploration de toutes les mi-

The inseparable Goncourts are represented in *Renée Mauperin* by Denoisel. Notwithstanding this fact, the father of Renée has also at least one experience in common with the author. During the incurable illness of Renée, while seeking distraction in the park one day, he disconsolately picks a copy of the *Illustration* only to lay it aside at once. He has guessed the meaning of the rebus: "Contre la mort il n'y a pas d'appel."⁵⁸ Such had also been the experience of the Goncourt brothers when they were despondent over the health of Rose, the cook.

Jupillon, in *Germinie Lacerteux*, plays the same seductive rôle as the dairy woman's son mentioned in the *Journal*.⁵⁹ The young man of real life, however, is described as "plus joli, plus original que l'imagination." He is a "svelte Hercule, surmonté d'une petite tête de Faustine."⁶⁰ Thus he produces the opposite impression from the sickening character with whom the authors strangely make Germinie fall desperately in love.

In view of the foregoing examples, it is by no means surprising to read the observation of M. Emile Faguet that our authors added to Renée Mauperin a number of features not belonging to the original. Such is their usual plan of procedure, and in order to appreciate fully the significance of this fact, a moment's reflection is necessary. The proposition that one man partakes of the characteristics of many others is not to be gainsaid: it is an easy inference from the kinship of the human race. Yet the

sères et de toutes les dégoûtations de l'humanité par cette réclamation: 'Et puis, pourquoi sommes-nous faits en viande?'"

⁵⁸ *Renée Mauperin*, chapter XLIV. Cf. *Journal*, II, p. 38.

⁵⁹ *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires*, p. 40.—"Elle entretenait des hommes, le fils de la crémère, auquel elle a meublé une chambre, etc." *Ibid.*, p. 41: "Elle a eu avec le fils de la crémère deux enfants, dont l'un a vécu six mois."

⁶⁰ *Journal*, I, p. 217.

impossibility of *perfect* duplication anywhere in nature has been recognized from time immemorial. The idea was present in the mind of Heraclitus when he observed that a man was never twice in the same stream. It is for substantially this reason that Bertillon, in our own time, was able to determine that only a few statistics, if accurately recorded, are sufficient to establish absolutely an identification. Nevertheless, the Goncourts, with their photographic method, often attempt to attribute to "A" as it were the *exact* finger-print of "X," the *exact* head of "Y," and the *exact* temperament of "Z."^{60a} Their method would be less vulnerable if "A's" finger bore only an ordinary resemblance to that of "X." The difficulty is that the Goncourts, by renouncing the principle of selection in art, are prone to insist upon an *absolute resemblance*—their notes frequently being thrust into their novels without alteration. Thus their characters, though possessing features, living in surroundings, and speaking a language precisely such as have been observed in real life, and jotted down with infinite pains upon the author's pads, are far from being truly realistic. They are contrary to "nature," to "history," and to the medical science of which the Goncourts professed themselves disciples. Many a romantic character of the early nineteenth century novel, though improbable, was at least possible, while the characters of the Goncourts would seem, if our reasoning is just, to be in many cases impossible. The position of Faguet is therefore an understatement of the case: nor is there ground for maintaining that the opinion of Brunetière about the exaggerations in the plot of *La Faustin*,

^{60a} Cf. J. Lemaitre, *Les Contemporains*, iv (1893), p. 223. For a contrary opinion, cf. F. Brunetière, *L'Immortel par M. Alphonse Dau-det*, *Revue des deux mondes*, Vol. 88, 3d series (1888), p. 699. Cf., however, F. Brunetière, *op. cit.*, Vol. 36, 3d series (1879), p. 447.

by Edmond de Goncourt, should not hold in great measure for the novels written by the brothers in collaboration.

Zola has expressed approval of the lack of plot at the beginning of the novels of the Goncourts. He regards the intrigue, which usually starts in the middle of the book, as an unfortunate concession to literary conventions.⁶¹ The Goncourts themselves have condemned in no uncertain terms not only a plot, but also every work of the imagination, with its too rigorous logic.⁶² Yet where they have attempted a plot, the Goncourts have generally proceeded with a mechanical method totally at variance with their own doctrine. Their desire seems to be to heap as many misfortunes upon their heroes and heroines as possible, the result, if not actually the cause, of their method of combining in one person the lives of several. Indeed, it is quite inconceivable that anybody in real life could undergo quite the total number of tortures that they many times inflict upon the individuals in their stories. Often when they have brought a character to the point of exhaustion, he is allowed to escape miraculously for a time, only that his agony may be prolonged, and the horror of the inevitable tragedy increased. One is frequently reminded, for all the world, of that favorite deity of the classical drama, the *deus ex machinâ*.

Let us examine, for instance, a bit of the plot of *Ger-*

⁶¹ Emile Zola, *Les romanciers naturalistes*, l. c.

⁶² *Journal*, II, p. 219: "Le défectueux de l'imagination, c'est que ses créations sont rigoureusement logiques. La vérité ne l'est pas. Ainsi, je viens de lire dans un roman, la description d'un salon religieux: tout s'y tient, depuis le portrait gravé du comte de Chambord jusqu'à la photographie du pape. Eh bien! je me rappelle avoir vu, dans le décor sacro-saint du salon du comte de Montalembert, un portrait de religieuse, qui était le costume de comédie d'une de ses parentes, jouant dans une pièce du XVIII^e siècle. Voici l'imprévu, le décousu, l'illogique du vrai."

minie Lacerteux, in order to observe this mechanical ebb and flow of fortunes. The story of the life of Mlle de Varandeuil is usually considered one of the best examples of narrative style in the novels of our authors. No injustice will be done them by citing this chapter ⁶³ as a fair sample of their method. Yet Mlle de Varandeuil, as we have already remarked, is made to endure not only her own misfortunes, but also some that really befell an uncle of the Goncourts.

The vicissitudes of this neglected child began early during the Reign of Terror. First her uncle was arrested; then her mother, panic-stricken, sold the family mansion for worthless paper. The father dared not leave his hiding-place. Relief was given by Sempronie, the daughter, who stood in the bread line to save her father's life. This resource was of short duration, for a jealous woman gave the child a kick which confined her to her bed for nearly a month. The family was unexpectedly preserved from starvation by a provision of rice stored away by a friend. Despite this succor, the financial condition of the family grew more and more desperate. They were saved for a time by a windfall: a haphazard investment in four vaudeville shares, made by M. de Varandeuil, proved most profitable. Yet Sempronie was not to be happy on this account. She waited upon her father, who in return despised her because she looked like a servant. Meanwhile her mother remarried in Germany, establishing her widowhood by the death certificate of her guillotined brother-in-law. Her brother had gone to the United States, leaving her alone with their irritable father, who ruined her eyes by compelling her to assist him in an unprofitable translation of Vasari. Apparent relief came when the father employed

⁶³ *Germinie Lacerteux*, chapter II.

a servant to do the housework which had fallen upon the shoulders of Sempronie. The servant presently became her father's mistress, and bore him a daughter. Sempronie was one day called upon to wait on this child at the table. She revolted, but her father never forgave her, and died ungrateful. As her father had prevented her from marrying, in order to command her entire services, the last hope of companionship was her brother. He returned from America, but with a negress wife, who soon grew jealous of Sempronie. In this manner, separated from every natural friend, Sempronie spent the remainder of her life in lonely spinsterhood.

In fact, while the art theories of the authors call for anachronisms and disarray here and there, as in the case of the nun who was dressed as an eighteenth-century actress,⁶⁴ they fall, whenever they are obliged to invent a plot, unconsciously into that very rigor of logic which they condemn. Such is particularly the case where they would narrate a series of misfortunes. We may be certain in advance that nothing which makes life worth living will be allowed to remain. Not only do the authors, by an inexorable system, make a clean sweep of Sempronie's friends, on one pretext or another, but they do the same thing for Coriolis—allowing always brief respites, that the agony may continue. Anatole had been a friend of Coriolis since their early days together in the studio of Langibout. His good-nature was so extreme that he could endure an extraordinary amount of buffeting, so that the arch-fiend Manette Salomon found it extremely difficult to dislodge him from the household of her paramour. After a series of manœuvres, Manette finally succeeded in getting him in her power, through a stratagem borrowed

⁶⁴ *Journal*, II, p. 219 *cit.*

from the legend of Potiphar's wife. Meanwhile she did her utmost to discourage Coriolis from receiving his other friends, with the exception of Garnotelle, whose influence she valued. Poor Coriolis retired more and more into solitude, his one comfort being his son. At length, by nursing Coriolis through an illness, Manette acquired such an ascendancy over him that she was enabled to drive Anatole out of the household. When, after long wanderings, first lodging with a policeman, then becoming a fisherman, eventually eking out a meagre living through orders for paintings obtained for him by Mme Crescent, he returned for a visit to Coriolis, he was insulted by the son, who had been trained by Manette to despise his father. The remainder of the *débâcle* was comparatively simple. Coriolis invited another friend, Massicot, to dinner. The invitation was declined on account of the cool reception always accorded to visitors by Manette and the servants. Crescent called one day to get a sketch promised him by Coriolis. Manette insisted that he accept one instead that was worth less money, and Crescent left the house forever. Once Coriolis revolted against the tyranny of Manette when his painting, the *Révision*, produced while he was still an idealist in matters of art, and not yet sacrificing his talents for money at the behest of his mistress, sold for 15,000 francs. In supreme defiance, he burned a very valuable painting before Manette's eyes, then settled back crushed. Manette had achieved a definite supremacy. The only friend remaining to Coriolis was Garnotelle, who offered to obtain for him a nomination to the French Academy. Coriolis, who had a spark of pride left, refused, and Garnotelle treated him thereafter with marked coolness. The last straw was the invitation from Garnotelle, about to marry Princess Moldave, to act as a witness at the wedding. Coriolis regarded the matter as an insult,

in view of his domestic relations. At the end of the story, we are told of the marriage of Manette and Coriolis, the latter being reduced to a hopeless nonentity.

It must be apparent that the theories of the Goncourts, if carried out completely, ought to mean no novel at all, but a biography pure and simple. Such is indeed the very language of the authors, for we have observed that they speak of their *Germinie Lacerteux* as "une biographie véridique à la façon d'une biographie d'histoire moderne."⁶⁵ The one production of the Goncourts which does not transgress their principle is the *Journal*, a more or less disconnected series of notes, trivial at times, but often interesting. The trouble is that the Goncourts have not been satisfied with the domain of the biographical sketch, and have attempted to construct works of fiction which should contain no element of the unreal. Struggling thus to continue two contradictory *genres*, they have felt obliged to weld together characters that were distinct in actual life, while those which remain comparatively intact are depicted in an environment not their own. The cumulative effect of their combinations of characters upon the exaggerations in their plots is a matter of importance that has been neglected by the critics. The total result of the defects in literary method upon which I have dwelt and of the exclusive attention which the Goncourts gave to the abnormalities of human nature is a type of fiction which is far removed from the truly natural.

OLIN H. MOORE.

⁶⁵ Cf. note 11.